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DOCUMENTS

I. Virginia Letters on the Scots Darien Colony, 1699.

THE Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, known later as the "Darien Company", owed its origin to the desire of the Scots to enjoy economic advantages similar to those possessed by the other nations of Europe.¹ The occasion for its establishment in 1695 was the increased pressure exerted by the English East India Company on private merchants. Its national character was the result of a strenuous investigation of its affairs by the English Parliament. It became the darling of the Jacobites as soon as they saw it was opposed by the king. Failure to secure foreign capital forced its directors to stake everything on Paterson's Darien scheme, which was to occupy the southern part of the American isthmus and to maintain a short route to the far East. William III heard rumors of the design, but the plan was kept so secret that he did not feel warranted to order the expedition not to sail. Instead he secretly employed Captain Richard Long, a visionary Quaker, who had made several unsuccessful voyages to America in search of treasure, to ascertain the whereabouts of the Scots. They had reached Darien, November 3, 1698, and were located by Captain Long a few days later. He sailed at once for London, arrived there late in December,² furnished the king with exact information as to the whereabouts of the Scots, months before this news came through the regular channels, and enabled him to take the necessary steps to protect his interests.

No one in Scotland had the slightest inkling of what the king had done until midsummer, when there arrived from America copies of proclamations that had been issued by the governors of Jamaica and Barbados. These were followed before long by copies of similar documents issued by Lord Bellomont as governor of New York and New England.³ All were of the same general tenor. Governor

¹ John Hill Burton, *History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 8 vols., 1898-1901), VIII, chaps. lxxxiv and lxxxv.

² MS. accounts of Captain Long, Public Record Office, Treasury Papers, 1698, Dec., Vol. 58, No. 51, p. 278.

³ John Scott, *Darien Bibliography* (Edinburgh, privately printed, 1904), No. 57, note; *A Full and Exact Collection of All the Considerable Addresses . . . and other Publick Papers, Relating to the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies*, etc. (London, 1700), 77-83.

Beeston's was the first to be issued and bore date at Jamaica, April 8, 1699. It reads:

Whereas I have received Commands from his Majesty, by the Right Honourable *James Vernon* Esq; one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, signifying to me, that his Majesty is unacquainted with the Intensions and Designs of the *Scots* settling at *Darien*: And that it is contrary to the Peace entred into with his Majesty's Allies; and therefore has commanded me, that no Assistance be given them. These are therefore in his Majesty's Name, and by Command, strictly to command his Majesty's Subjects whatsoever, that they do not presume, on any pretence whatsoever, to hold any Correspondence with the said *Scots*, nor to give them any Assistance of Arms, Ammunition, Provisions, or any other Necessaries whatsoever, either by themselves or any other for them; or by any of their Vessels, or of the *English* Nation, as they will answer the Contempt of his Majesty's Command to the contrary, at their utmost peril.

Such evidence of the king's ill-will aroused great indignation in Scotland. This was raised to white heat a few weeks later when it was learned that the colonists had abandoned Darien. The disaster was at once charged to the issuance of the proclamation. As a matter of fact the colonists had been reduced by the deadly climate to such desperate straits that, on the first rumor which reached Darien of Beeston's proclamation, they stampeded, and deserted the fever-stricken swamps without ever waiting to see how the proclamation would affect them, or even if the rumor that it had been issued was true.¹ This fact did not prevent the company from declaring that the proclamation had not only ruined the first settlement but had so heavily handicapped the succeeding attempts that their entire enterprise was ruined.

Now the orders which gave rise to the proclamations were sent out so secretly that prolonged search in England and Scotland has hitherto failed to reveal any trace of them. Until the discovery by Professor A. C. McLaughlin of these two letters in the Virginia State Library, it has always been a question when the orders were sent out, to whom they were sent, and precisely what directions they contained.

The date of the first letter, January 2, 1698/9, shows that the orders were sent out almost immediately after Captain Long's return, that is, as soon as the king was sure the Scots had settled in Spanish territory. The fact that this letter was addressed to a governor who did not issue a proclamation is fairly clear evidence that all the colonial governors received similar letters, although only three of them thought it necessary to issue proclamations. The contents of the letter throw an interesting light on the diplomacy of the period;

¹*Darien Papers* (Edinburgh, Bannatyne Club, 1849), 191-193.

for there is no mention of Darien. Specific reference to the whereabouts of the new colony would only have been to tell the English colonists a piece of news of which the king desired that they should be ignorant as long as possible, lest the more daring spirits should profit by the knowledge to disobey the governors' orders more effectively. To mention Darien would have been to show the Spaniards that he had known of the Darien project in time to have stopped it, for otherwise he could not have received this special information. Furthermore it would have enraged the Jacobites in Scotland by demonstrating that he had sent out a spy in order to undermine their enterprise.

The second letter was sent out after it had become known all over Europe that the Scots were at Darien, and followed the receipt of a memorial against the Scots sent in by the Spanish ambassador in May, 1699.¹ It resulted in the issuance of only one proclamation, and that by Governor Gray of Barbados in September, 1699.² He was probably the only one of the colonial governors who had not heard of the desertion of Darien by the first expedition. The other governors knew that, although reinforcements had been sent out, the enterprise had been damaged beyond repair. HIRAM BINGHAM.

I. JAMES VERNON TO FRANCIS NICHOLSON.

Duplicate

WHITEHALL. 2^d Janry 169⁸₉

Sir,

His Maj^{ty} having received Advice from the Island of Jamaica that severall Ships of force fitted out in Scotland were arrived at the Island of S^t Thomas, (with an Intenⁿcon as they Declared) to settle themselves in some part of America their design being unknown to his Maj^{ty}, least the same should derogate from the treaties his Maj^{ty} have entered into with the Crown of Spain or be otherwise prejudiciall to any of his Maj^{ty}s Colonyes in the west Indies; his Maj^{ty} Commands me to signify his Pleasure to you that you strictly enjoyn all his Maj^{ty}s Subjects or others inhabiting within the districts of your Governm^t that they forbear holding any correspondence with, or giving any assistance to any of the said p^{er}sons while they are engaged in the fores^d enterprize, and that no provisions, arms, amunition, or other necessarys whatsoever be carryed to them from thence, or be p^{er}mitted to be carryed either in their own Vessells or other Ships or Vessells for their use; his Maj^{ty} requires that you do not fail herein; but take particular care that the above mentioned direcⁿcons be fully observed, and that you send hither an account of your proceedings in the execuⁿ of these his Commands.

I am Sir

Your most humble Servant

JA: VERNON

¹ *A Full and Exact Collection*, 40.

² *Ibid.*, 83-84.

II. JAMES VERNON TO FRANCIS NICHOLSON.

WHITEHALL 18th June 1699*Sir*

I signified to You his Maj^{ty}s Pleasure in January last concerning the scots who had undertaken an Expedition to the West Indies, the place not being then known in which they designed to settle and his Maj^{ty} being since informed that they have taken possession of the Bay of Caerat¹ [or Carrat] near the Bay of Darien between Cartagena and Porto Bello and are fortifying themselves there, seeming resolved to maintain it by force against the Spaniards: His Maj^{ty} Considering this attempt as a violaçon of the Treaty's subsisting between his Maj^{ty} and the Crown of Spain, Comānds me to acquaint You that he expects his former orders should be strictly observed, a Duplicate whereof is therefore inclosed. I suppose upon the receipt of the first Letter You have given all necessary Directions that no Correspondence should be kept with the said Scotch Colony and that no provisions, ammunitiō, or other assistance should be furnisht them, or be suffered to be conveyed to them from any part of your Government, His Maj^{ty} would have the same care continued, so as the said orders may in all particulars be fully obeyed and put in execution.

I am Sir

Your most humble Servant

JA : VERNON

To Francis Nicholson Esq^r His Maj^{ty}s Lieutenant and Governour Generall of Virginia in America

2. A Letter of Marshall to Jefferson, 1783.

IN this centennial period of the Lewis and Clark exploration, much interest has been displayed in one of the letters in the Draper Manuscript Collection in the Wisconsin Historical Library, a note from Thomas Jefferson, dated Annapolis, December 4, 1783, to General George Rogers Clark, suggesting to the latter an exploration toward the Pacific Ocean, similar in character to that which Jefferson twenty years later succeeded in inducing Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (younger brother of George) to undertake. This letter has already appeared in the columns of the REVIEW (III, 673), and has several times recently been elsewhere published in facsimile. A short time ago the Wisconsin Historical Library was presented by Professor R. E. N. Dodge, of the University of Wisconsin, with an autograph letter of one of his forebears, Chief Justice John Marshall, which throws additional light on this famous letter of Jefferson to George Rogers Clark. The Marshall letter was written at Williamsburg, Va., and addressed to Thomas Jefferson. Therein

¹ Modern Carreto. Governor Gray in his proclamation, September 5, 1699, says "the Island of Cuirat near Darien". *A Full and Exact Collection*, 84.